AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

Claim 1 (Previously Presented): Process for removing halide compounds adhering to finely divided metal oxide particles by means of steam, the metal oxide particles being formed by reaction of halide-containing starting materials by hydrolysis or oxidizing gases, wherein

the finely divided metal oxide particles containing residues of halide compounds are applied, together with reaction gases, to the upper part of an upright column and migrate downwards by means of gravity,

the steam, optionally mixed with air, is applied at the bottom end of the column,

the finely divided metal oxide particles containing residues of halide compounds and the steam are fed counter-currently,

the metal oxide particles freed of halide residues are removed at the base of the column, and

steam and halide residues are removed at the head of the column,

which process is characterized in that

the column is heated in such a manner that the temperature difference $T_{bottom} - T_{top}$ between the lower part and the upper part of the column is at least 20°C and a maximum temperature of ~~500~~ no greater than 150°C prevails in the column, and

the metal oxide particles have a residence time in the column of from 1 second to 30 minutes.

Claim 2 (Previously Presented): Process according to claim 1, characterized in that the temperature difference $T_{bottom} - T_{top}$ is from 20°C to 150°C.

Claim 3 (Previously Presented): Process according to claim 1, characterized in that the maximum temperature in the column is from 150 to 500°C.

Claim 4 (Previously Presented): Process according to claim 1, characterized in that the residence time is from 5 seconds to 5 minutes.

Claim 5 (Previously Presented): Process according to claim 1, characterized in that the metal oxide particles in the stream entering the column have a temperature of from about 100°C to 500°C.

Claim 6 (Previously Presented): Process according to claim 1, characterized in that the amount of steam that is introduced is from 0.0025 to 0.25 kg of steam per hour per kg of metal oxide particles.

Claim 7 (Canceled)

Claim 8 (Previously Presented): Process according to claim 1, characterized in that, after the metal oxide particles have been removed at the base of the column, they are passed through at least one further column in which the maximum temperature does not exceed 500°C.

Claim 9 (Previously Presented): Process according to claim 8, characterized in that the metal oxide particles and the steam are fed co-currently or counter-currently in the further columns.

Claim 10 (Previously Presented): Process according to claim 8, characterized in that the second and subsequent columns have a temperature difference T_{bottom} - T_{top} between the lower part and the upper part of the columns of at least 5°C.

Claim 11 (Previously Presented): Process according to claim 2, wherein the maximum temperature in the column is from 150 to 500°C.

Claim 12 (Previously Presented): Process according to claim 2, wherein the residence time is from 5 seconds to 5 minutes.

Claim 13 (Previously Presented): Process according to claim 3, wherein the residence time is from 5 seconds to 5 minutes.

Claim 14 (Previously Presented): Process according to claim 2, wherein the metal oxide particles in the stream entering the column have a temperature of from about 100°C to 500°C.

Claim 15 (Previously Presented): Process according to claim 3, wherein the metal oxide particles in the stream entering the column have a temperature of from about 100°C to 500°C.

Claim 16 (Previously Presented): Process according to claim 4, wherein the metal oxide particles in the stream entering the column have a temperature of from about 100°C to 500°C.

Claim 17 (Previously Presented): Process according to claim 2, wherein the amount of steam that is introduced is from 0.0025 to 0.25 kg of steam per hour per kg of metal oxide particles.

Claim 18 (Previously Presented): Process according to claim 3, wherein the amount of steam that is introduced is from 0.0025 to 0.25 kg of steam per hour per kg of metal oxide particles.

Claim 19 (Previously Presented): Process according to claim 4, wherein the amount of steam that is introduced is from 0.0025 to 0.25 kg of steam per hour per kg of metal oxide particles.

Claim 20 (Previously Presented): Process according to claim 5, wherein the amount of steam that is introduced is from 0.0025 to 0.25 kg of steam per hour per kg of metal oxide particles.

Claim 21 (Canceled)